

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **Congressman John Conyers, Jr.**

**Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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**CONYERS TO ASHCROFT:**  
**PLEASE SEND US ANSWERS TO THE 38 GUN SAFETY QUESTIONS**

Representative John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, joined the Violence Policy Center to release the VPC's new study "Shot Full of Holes: Deconstructing John Ashcroft's Second Amendment." Conyers issued the following statement:

"We all remember the Attorney General's confirmation hearing conversion when he replied, in response to issue after issue, that he would seek to enforce -- not to change -- existing laws. Senator Leahy noted at Ashcroft's confirmation hearings that his dramatic reversals on public policy had a Cinderella quality. We now know that the clock has struck midnight and the carriage is really a pumpkin.

It turns out that Attorney General Ashcroft is not the moderate he pretended to be but is really just like the old Senator Ashcroft, a faithful friend of the gun lobby.

In this groundbreaking report, the Violence Policy Center has exposed an Attorney General who is apparently willing to disregard well settled gun safety law to further the National Rifle Association's agenda of dismantling our criminal background check system for firearm purchases.

In his confirmation hearings, he said 'The Attorney General must lead a professional, non-partisan Justice Department that is uncompromisingly fair, defined by integrity and dedicated to upholding the rule of law.' But in a letter he sent to the National Rifle Association, to coincide with its annual convention, the Attorney General embraced a view of the second amendment that Chief Justice Burger said was a 'fraud on the American public,' that the courts have repeatedly rejected in case after case, and that the Justice Department has rejected for decades.

The fact is that the Supreme Court long ago settled this issue in *United States v. Miller*, in which it held that the right to bear arms is not an individual right, but a collective right held by state militias. And year after year, in case after case, district court decisions have backed it up.

If that is upholding the rule of law, then Bob Jones University embraces diversity.

When this letter became public, I wrote the Attorney General as part of the Judiciary Committee's official oversight process to find out how this letter came to be coincidentally released on the eve of the NRA convention, whether Justice Department officials who are entrusted with enforcing gun safety law were even consulted, and why the Department of Justice is reversing itself. Almost two months later, the silence is deafening.

Tonight, I spoke with the Attorney General and re-sent my 38 questions on this matter. I asked him to please answer them immediately.

The Attorney General just barely skated through his confirmation hearing by saying that he supported gun safety laws. Now we have learned when it comes to Ashcroft and guns, the fox is guarding the henhouse.”

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